

# Andropov reported doubtful U.S. is willing to curb arms

MOSCOW (AP) — Soviet leader Yuri V. Andropov said yesterday he doubts the United States is willing to reach agreement on restraining the growth of nuclear weapons in Europe. West German opposition leader Hans-Jochen Vogel reported.

But Vogel added: "My hopes that there will be an agreement have by no means been reduced by today's discussions, and have in fact been strengthened."

Vogel, the opposition Social Democrats' candidate for chancellor in West German elections March 6, spoke with the new Soviet leader for 2½ hours. The nuclear arms negotiations will resume in a few weeks, and Vogel said Andropov is skeptical about prospects for an accord.

"Here is where our positions diverged and I expressed my conviction that nobody in the United States wants a nuclear conflict," said Vogel, who met with President Reagan in Washington last week.

The length of Vogel's meeting with Andropov was unusual by Kremlin

standards. Vogel was the first political leader from a NATO country to meet with Andropov since the funeral of President Leonid I. Brezhnev Nov. 15.

The Soviets attach great importance to persuading Western Europeans that the United States is throwing up obstacles to Soviet proposals at Geneva. West Germany is considered a key target of the Soviet persuasion because there is a strong West German anti-nuclear movement and because 108 missiles are to be stationed in West Germany under a NATO plan.

The NATO allies plan to begin deployment of 572 U.S. medium-range nuclear missiles at the end of the year if there is no progress at Geneva.

Vogel said Andropov's answers to a number of questions about the latest Soviet proposal encouraged him, but he said he would not divulge them until he relays them to the West German government.

On Dec. 21, Andropov proposed reducing the Soviet medium-range arsenal in Europe to the combined level of the British and French, or by several hundred, to 162. The offer was contin-

gent on NATO scrapping its deployment plans.

Most NATO leaders said the Soviets still would have an advantage, and questioned whether the Soviets planned the reductions by dismantling the missiles, or shuttling them to Soviet Asia, where they could be brought back easily to within striking range of Western Europe.

The official Soviet news agency Tass said Andropov's explanation to Vogel emphasized that Kremlin proposals "open a realistic way to just agreements on radical reductions of the nuclear arsenals, damaging the security of neither side and to stronger mutual trust and general security."

Tass also praised Egon Bahr, a Social Democrat disarmament expert accompanying Vogel.

"Like other sober-minded West German politicians, Egon Bahr understands what truly suicidal consequences ... even a limited nuclear war with the use of only short-range tactical nuclear weapons portends ... for the small and densely populated Federal Republic of Germany."